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ABSTRACT

The stages of interlanguage, the speech of beginning second language learners as they progress toward second language fluency, are described. Examples are drawn from the speech of Spanish speaking students of English as a second language. The continuum of interlanguage development from native language forms to target language forms includes three stages: basilang, mesolang, and acrolang, the closest stage to the target language. Examples of developing along this continuum describe the acquisition of English negation by Spanish speakers, noun phrase morphology, verb phrase morphology, formation of questions, and relative clauses. These examples illustrate the simplification, transfer, and relexification aspects of interlanguage which occur during the basilang stage. Although the goal of second language teachers is to eliminate interlanguage in their students' speech, observation of interlanguage can provide valuable information about how languages are learned. (RW)

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THE EARLY STAGES OF INTERLANGUAGE

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There is something in an ESL teacher's environment, something he or she is surrounded with all of the time, but because of the nature of our profession, it may be something that attracts little attention. Other specialists have certain things in their environment that offer them pleasure or things they notice. For example, an artist may observe a particular lighting or color arrangement that has nothing to do with his art. An architect may see some aspect of a building or some geometric form which captures his attention because of his special training and interests. Teachers of English to non-English speakers are surrounded with something that is also of interest, something that although it is our task to abolish it, nevertheless while it's there, we might take notice of it. This object is interlanguage. Interlanguage is the speech of a second-language learner anywhere between his native language and perfect fluency in his second language. ESL students use this type of language everyday, but their instructors pay little attention to this transitional phase because the teacher's goal is to guide the students beyond interlanguage toward full proficiency in the second language. Some of the following examples focus our attention on interlanguage, so that we may begin to understand it more fully.

This is a transcription of an address given at the 1980 CATESOL mini-conference in San Francisco.

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There are various aspects of interlanguage. The first aspect is simplification and the second is transfer, where one may observe aspects of the native language appearing in the second language speech. A sub-category of transfer is called relexification. The following examples all come from the very early stages of interlanguage, from beginning learners or those who have been in the United States for a very long time but have never progressed beyond the beginning stages. One well understood aspect of interlanguage is negation, particularly the acquisition of the English negation by Spanish speakers. There are four stages in the acquisition of English negation by Spanish speakers. The first stage is called the "No + verb." In this stage the student forms sentences like "I no can see." "You no tell your mother," and "No like coffee." Placing "no" in front of the whole verb is a very simple way of negating.

One may recognize the similarity between this simple negation and the way negation is formed in Spanish. After learners have been here awhile, they begin to change that "No" to another form of negation which is "Don't" and that's the second stage. One sees "don't" + verb" or "don't V" constructions. In this second stage, a student may say "I don't can explain." When compared to "I no can see," we see that this "don't" does not consist of "do" plus the negative; instead it's a more involved chunk of language use. It's Anglisizing "No" a little bit more, making it a little more like English. It's not "do" plus negative; it's another negative altogether. One hears "I don't can explain," "He don't like it," and then "I don't hear" which is accidentally correct. Another utterance is "I don't will go," which really shows the "don't" being used as another kind of negator.

These stages all overlap: learners don't wake up one morning and just shift suddenly. The stages are indicated by the predominant negator at a particular time. The third stage we call auxiliary + negative or "aux-neg," and this approximates English. In English we form the negative by placing the negative particle after the first auxiliary element or helping verb. The two auxiliaries that seem to be negated first are "can" and "is," so "can't" and "isn't" are the first aux-negs. The student may begin with "You can't tell her," or "It's not danger" or "Somebody is not coming," and then progress to "was," "were," "would," etc.

The final stage is called analyzed "don't" and this is where that "don't" of the "don't V" stage (stage 2) is analyzed into the various forms of the auxiliary "do" plus negator. The teacher sees "do not," "doesn't," "does not," "didn't" and "did not." Here the auxiliary is the carrier of tense. In general, in this final stage one can see the chunk "don't" being broken down and the auxiliary "do" becoming a genuine carrier of tense and negation, and in this way English negation is eventually acquired.

Now this, in a sense, provides a continuum of development from Spanish negation to English negation. This continuum includes several stages: the earliest stage is called the BASILANG, the middle stages the MESOLANG, and the last stage close to the target language (corresponding roughly to analyzed "don't") the ACROLANG.

BASILANG corresponds to the "No V" stage in negation. Consider subjects who were studied longitudinally, and who were at the "No V" stage or who were cross-sectional samples of people who had been here for maybe ten or more years but never got beyond the "No V" stage and then look at other aspects of their grammar. Holding negation constant, all the subjects under consideration are at the "No V" stage of negation. Now notice their noun phrase morphology, the verb phrase morphology, and the way they form questions, relative clauses and other aspects of grammar. First consider simplification during the BASILANG -- how English is simplified to facilitate communication during these very early stages. In examining simplification, the first aspect to be studied is the present progressive or the present continuous form where we have the auxiliary plus "ing," and thus sentences like "I am walking," "You are walking," "He is walking," "We were walking," and "He was walking." Look at this first example: "Now I try for the English." It's very clear from context, that it means "Now I am trying to learn English." There is no question about that, but the learner drops the auxiliary "am" and drops the "ing" and although he communicates perfectly well, we regard this as simplification revealing an absence of grammatical morphology. Here the learner relies on context to get the exact meaning across.

Another example is "The friends still play the machine." And here, it seems once again that the auxiliary "are" and the "ing" from "Playing," are absent. Another example is "This man sit down the chair" for "This man is sitting down in the chair." "Is" and "ing" are absent. Since these functors, as they're called, are usually not stressed in speech, they're not very salient. And since they don't carry an awful lot of the communication in the utterance, learners just leave these things out in order to simplify their production of the second language.

The next example -- "I living in Oxnard," -- is clearly meant to indicate a past form with the "was" absent and the "ing" present. And that's what educators find -- the "ing" learned before the auxiliaries. As a matter of fact, for the Spanish speakers and practically all speakers of all languages that have been studied, "ing" is one of the first three morphemes to be learned, so one sees the "ing" coming in well before the auxiliary. So when learners give such sentences as "Now I try for the English" and then later say "Now I trying for the English" one knows there is progress. Students simply don't learn the aux before "ing."

A final example -- "Now she is talk ah talk to...ah one, one friend," is a little less usual. Here the auxiliary appears but not the "ing." It may be just a slip of the tongue that caused the auxiliary to come out and, for some reason, the "ing" is lost. Such forms appear in the data but they are not as frequent.

The next thing to be examined is the copula which is simply the verb "to be" with its forms "am," "is," "are," "was" and "were." "It's a girl." What's simplified there? There's no loss of "is." "It girl," would be a more obvious simplification. "This is no good," is fine. "Any, any verbs is more extensive" is a little bit of a problem because here "is" is substituted for "are." In this example, "Other sports is tennis, tennis y basketball," "is" is also substituted for "are." Now, with Spanish speakers, because "is" and the Spanish copula "es" are so similar, Spanish speakers get "is" very quickly, so along with "ing" coming in early, "is" is going to be in among the first three morphemes as well. So one doesn't see the simplification that results from simply the lack of that morpheme, but one does see something called "elaborative simplification" or "over generalization." The "is" is used for other copulas; it is substituted for "are" in two of the examples here. It may be substituted for "was" and "were" as well. So that's another kind of simplification -- just using one copula, one form of the verb "to be." Look at this example -- "Next time is better, no?" meaning "Next time will be better." Here "is" is substituted for "will be," producing another kind of simplification where the student latches onto one form and uses it in an appropriate context. We call that "elaborative simplification." The kind of simplification where the morpheme or ending is left off we call "restrictive simplification." Thus, we have "restrictive" and "elaborative" simplification, and to keep them straight, one should equate elaborative simplification basically with overgeneralization.

The next set of examples involves third person singular. All instructors have wrestled with this one. It's among the last three English morphemes to be learned -- often the very last. Now why is this? The rule isn't hard to learn, but it really communicates nothing to them. As soon as the student confronts "he" or "she" s/he notices the "s" for the singular verb doesn't communicate anything. Therefore, it gets dropped. And one hears utterances like "He speak English," "Everybody live here," "He say 'Yes,'" "It take a long time," and then "San Diego have many Spanish people," (where "have" is substituted for "has").

When teachers teach the present tense (usually fairly early in an English course), they come to the third person singular, they teach it, they find that the students are not using it at all, and they keep going back and drilling it. Well, this morpheme has its own agenda -- it just can't be

pushed. And direct instruction seems to have little effect. If a learner says "He speak English" the kind of correction that might be appropriate is just saying "That's right, "He speaks English." Thus you give the full form. But you may have learners who have been around an awfully long time and who on an FSI scale of language proficiency, which runs from 1 to 5, may be 3's and still occasionally drop the "s." So don't get overly frustrated if you find that in spontaneous speech it's being lost and if and finally when you do begin to see it, you can feel pleased because it indicates significant progress.

The past irregular is unusual in a way. It's not really a morpheme; it's more of a lexical item. But simplification comes about by just using the present form in a past tense context: Thus one finds sentences like "When I come to Mexico," meaning "When I came to Mexico," "When I go two times" where "go" is substituted for "went," "When I buy the car," "My father dead in 1955," (for "died") and "I bring everybody." Here the learner is simplifying by just using a present tense form or what we call the base form in a context where the past tense would be required, relying upon the context to get the past tense meaning across. And it works amazingly well. Past irregular is another tough one -- it's almost as difficult as third person singular. That "ed" that gets reduced to "t" or "d" very often, isn't very salient, isn't heard and thus doesn't appear. Also it's helped here by adverbs: you can use "yesterday," "last year," "last week" and get the same idea across. Also, many learners find a way to indicate that what they are talking about is in the past; they indicate it once in the discourse and then subsequently don't mark the verb. The learners don't put on "ed"; they just realize the person who's listening knows they are talking about a past tense event and then simplify by not producing the "ed."; example, "I live in Mexico." Also in the statements "I watch the Super Bowl," and "They walk in with your father," all the "ed's" are absent. Therefore, we have seen that two of the last morphemes to be acquired are third person singular and "ed." So if you're not getting them across even to your students after you've taught them repeatedly, don't become overly frustrated. This is another one of those morphemes that has its own agenda; it'll come. Correct the utterance by expanding it. If somebody says "I live in Mexico," you might say, "Oh, you lived in Mexico," and they'll get it when they're ready. But it's a tough one; it takes a long time and it's simpler just not to use it.

The next set of examples is "have" or "had" plus "en," the present and past perfect. Watch how these get simplified. It's very interesting. In the first utterance, one sees "I never the jail me." Which means "I have never been in jail." The "never" is good enough to carry the notion of present perfect -- "never" plus context -- and the student doesn't

have to use all that complicated morphology. "Have," the auxiliary, and "been," the past participle, are just not necessary. In "I never go there," once again the "never" cues the listener to interpret the utterances as present perfect. Other adverbs like "still" and "yet" are sometimes used by learners instead of producing the complicated morphology of the present perfect. Thus the listener figures these things out by context. If the student gets positive feedback with such forms, s/he may not be motivated to run around acquiring all that complicated morphology. Consider, "I working ten years." Once again with the "ten years," if the listener knows that the speaker is working now and has been working in the past, then he can simply fill in, "I have been working," for "I working."

Now let us examine some noun phrases. The first aspect of noun phrase morphology to be learned is the plural, and my examples of this are varied. For example, "Have a two boys" (I have two boys). There is no problem with that in terms of the plural "s." But "two, three box" is a little bit harder to understand. "Boxes" requires a whole extra syllable. and it takes a little more effort in articulation. The learner may realize that, consciously or unconsciously, and just let the plural notion, be carried by the numeral "two." In "I stay there a couple days," you have the plural "s" with no problem. And yet we see this construction: "only four week." For Spanish speakers, and we're talking about the Spanish-English basilang here, plurals are formed in ways very similar to English and thus the plural form comes in early. It is acquired about the same time as "ing"; it's one of the first three. So the first three morphemes are "ing," copula, and plural "s." But not only is this true for Spanish speakers; it's true for every native language background we have found. Those are the first three morphemes to be acquired.

Next we look at the possessive: "Mama food better." Juxtaposition handles it perfectly well. In English the possessive is formed by having possessor, apostroph "s," and then possessed. Well, if one forgets about the "s" and just puts possessor possessed, people are going to guess that the speaker means possessive. For example, "My father sister," -- clearly means my father's sister. No problem. Another way to keep language simple is to use your native language. That's simpler than using the target language. "Mother de my wife." This is quite simple. "Brother de Kennedy." (Robert Kennedy.) That works out fine. So one can either leave it out, put in the native language equivalent, or put in a translation of the native language equivalent. So one hears, "She no more go to the school of your wife." Here we have possessed-possessor and in the same form as Spanish but with "of" instead of "de."

Now we are off noun and verb phrase morphology, and we are going to look at some sentence structures. The first

one is "wh" questions. In English when one forms a "wh" question, an information question, one has the "wh" word, then the auxiliary, then the subject noun phrase, then the main verb, and then the rest of the sentence. For example, "wh" word, "when," auxiliary word "are," subject-noun phrase 'you," main verb "going," -- "When are you going?" This is complex because one has to invert that auxiliary. Take a declarative sentence, for example, "You are going," and it becomes "are you going" -- "When are you going?" Learners like to put the "wh" word in front of a declarative sentence. So you get utterances such as, "What you say me," meaning "What did you say to me?" It is simplified by not using a past tense of the verb and not using the auxiliary "did" at all. Also notice that it is "What you say me," rather than "What you said me." In "What you said me?" the tense is marked on the verb, but it lacks the complicated transformation where one lets the tense fall on the auxiliary "did" and then moves the "did" in front of "you." There's a lot of transformational work there and no need for it because "What you said me," really communicates the message perfectly well. "What did you say to me," is, in a way, no longer necessary. One wonders why native speakers ever bother to go beyond this.

Here's a very interesting utterance. A learner comes to the United States and he is asked over and over again, "Where do you live? Where do you live?" and he learns to give the answer. But the "do" still isn't very salient while "Where you live," carries a lot of meaning. So he knows that and he has to ask the same question of somebody else, so he asks "Where you live your mother?" He uses a chunk, a formulaic utterance, "Where you live," and then whoever s/he's talking about. He says "Where you live your mother," "Where you live yourfather," "Where you live your sister," and the listener eventually catches on. So all the student has to memorize is that "Where you live" and then after it substitute whoever s/he's talking about. That sort of thing appears quite frequently in children's speech, less frequently in adult's speech. And then "How long you have this beard?" Notice the "how long" in the sentence and "you have this beard." Put them together and one has a perfectly good question. No messing around with inverting auxiliaries and so on. But look at the next one -- "What is your religion?"; it's perfectly correct. If it were uninverted, one would say "What your religion is?" But what we find with Spanish speakers is that all the "wh" words that are followed with "is" copula come out correctly. There are a couple of reasons for this. Perhaps the "wh" word plus "is" is very frequent in the input from native speakers but it also directly translates from Spanish -- "Quien es," "que es" and so on. If the student just translates s/he will get the right form. Leaning on the native language is simpler for the student, and this will be discussed in the section on transfer.

In English "Yes"/"No" questions can be inverted or produced in the statement form with rising intonation. However, such transformations are variable in English -- sometimes one sees "You going to the movies tonight?" or "Are you going to the movies tonight?" It's very difficult to determine the context in which you have to invert or don't have to invert. A research project was done on this about four years ago and the kinds of things that cue inversion in "wh" questions were found to be very complicated. There are things like amount of presupposition, the effort the speaker is making to change the topic, or the amount of emotion in the utterance. Now, presupposition and emotion are subjective mental qualities and you can't really observe them. Thus we can't determine from context when inversion is absolutely necessary in English. So when you see a learner is not inverting, you're not sure if h/she is making mistakes or doing it correctly because native speakers do it both ways. But if you see that a learner is NEVER inverting in "Yes"/"No" questions, then you've got a cue that h/she is simplifying in some way. If it's always statement form with rising intonation, then it looks like a simplification strategy and some of the learners that I've studied do nothing but that. Thus, you hear things such as "You will come back here next Monday?" "This is neck here?" "You like one Cognac?" But we do have one inverted "Yes/"No" question among the examples and it's "Do you like drink anything?" Where do you think this "do you like" comes from? Well, I think it's another one of those memorized chunks because the learner is always asked "Do you like this?" "Do you like that?" and learns "Do you like." So with that he gets "Do you like--" and then just substitutes anything after it. When we first saw these we said, "My goodness, this is unexpected. How are we getting all these inversions so early? And particularly something so complicated as 'd'?" You know in statements we didn't see any use of "do" and all of a sudden it appeared with "like" and "want." "Do you like?" or "Do you want?" And it is simply because they've heard it so much they've memorized the form.

Relative pronouns are very interesting. For example, "I have one girl sing very nice." It means there is one girl who sings very well. In standard English, a relative pronoun "who" is needed between "girl" and "sing" but students leave it out. It really doesn't cause any problem. Consider the next example "Hey, you want to play another game I have over here?" A native speaker might say "Game which I have" or "game that I have." In Standard English the relative pronoun is optional -- one can either put it in or leave it out -- but notice the choice by the learner is to leave it out. "Give me a picture que have one book with a pencil"; one sees the same approach as in the possessive. Keep the production of the utterance simple by using your native language. In a fairly extensive study of the acquisition of relative clauses

during the "No V" stage, it seemed to work in the following way. First of all, the student just doesn't use relative clauses at all. This seems to be the strategy: Don't get yourself involved in relative clauses. If you do get stuck with one, don't use the relative pronoun, don't use it when it's required and certainly don't use it when it's optional. And if you feel like using one, use one from your native language -- use "que." See how that keeps things simple?

Talmy Givon, a linguist at the University of Oregon, has made some hypotheses about the nature of topic comment structures versus subject-predicate structures. He believes that topic-comment structures are more basic and simpler than subject-predicate structures. Givon says they are more likely to appear in early child language acquisition and there is research which seems to indicate this. He expects also to find them in pidgin languages. He even hypothesizes that in the history of a language the earlier stages are more likely to be more topic-comment than subject-predicate oriented. If he is right, we can look at topic-comment as being simpler than subject-predicate. A topic-comment structure is a structure that consists of a topic and a comment. In the topic is old information, and in the comment there is some comment on that old information. They are just hooked together by some kind of -- not syntax -- but what might be called parataxis consisting of juxtaposition and maybe some rising intonation, vowel lengthening or pauses. The examples will make it clearer. "Ramon seventeen." What this means is, "As for Ramon, he's seventeen." "My familia famil five year." From the context we know it means, "As for my family, they have been here five years," or "My family has been here for five years." "Ramon, in a school Los Angeles." "As for Ramon, he goes to school in Los Angeles," or "Ramon goes to school in Los Angeles." In "Yeah, Orange in Anaheim three month," the student was talking about where he had worked and meant "As for Anaheim in Orange County, I worked there for three months." I would encourage you to try and listen for this kind of phrasing and if you hear it take note because this hypothesis has been worked out on only one or two subjects. There is some preliminary data in this regard but it would be interesting to see how far it goes. I would like to see some confirmation of Givon's hypothesis in second-language acquisition data.

Transfer can be considered simplification as well. If one is transferring from her/his native language, one keeps things simpler because the native language is already known. Consider the "No-V" structure. Although we might suppose that the source of the "No-V" structure is Spanish, the interesting thing is that we find many Japanese speakers begin with that form as well. And in Japanese the verb comes in final position with the negative after the verb. Therefore it seems unlikely

that this form could be a transfer from Japanese. So why do Japanese and Spanish speakers both begin with this form. It seems quite unusual. Perhaps there are two things going on -- on the one hand "no-V" is a very simple way to negate: "no" plus the verb. So it's a form of simplification, but in Spanish speakers that simplification is reinforced by transfer because it's also the form in Spanish. So one has two forces producing that form in Spanish -- simplification and transfer -- and only one source producing it in the interlanguage of Japanese speakers, simplification. As a result one finds that in Spanish speakers the "no-V" form is very pervasive and enduring where as it doesn't appear for all Japanese speakers and when it does appear, it doesn't seem to last as long. This may be because in Japanese-English interlanguage, it's just enforced by one motivation -- simplification. Also in negation one finds another influence of transfer. Recall the sequence of acquisition for negation: we found that Spanish speakers start with "no + verb," then go on to "don't" and then "can't." Japanese speakers first get "no + verb" and then "can't" and then "don't." Why the difference in order? Who do Spanish speakers have "don't" before "can't" and Japanese speakers have "can't" before "don't?" I have discussed this with a number of Japanese speakers and Japanese linguists and they feel there's some quality about the verb "can" in Japanese that makes it more salient. Evidently it is less of a model and it has more of a main verb status. At the same time, there may be some sociolinguistic pressure to use "can't" rather than "don't" because it is less direct. I have been told that Japanese students say "I can't speak English" or "I can't understand," rather than "I don't speak English," or "I don't understand." The fact that "can't" comes in first may be due to one of these influences from Japanese.

Another aspect of transfer is the copula, specifically here the copula "is." Spanish speakers, no matter how low they are on the continuum, no matter how basilang they are, never supply "is" correctly less than 72% of the time. Japanese speakers rarely supply it correctly more than 35% of the time when they are in the basilang. The reason is probably fairly clear: the Spanish have that copula "es" which they transfer directly to English. Japanese has a copula but of several forms, none of them quite as similar to English as "es" or used in quite the same way; therefore this is not as easy to transfer. Use of the plural works the same way. It appears very early for Spanish speakers. It comes in somewhat later for Japanese speakers, but Japanese don't mark plural in that way. The reverse happens with possessive, however. Japanese possessive is quite like English -- it's possessor, then possessive particle and then possessed. So one finds that Japanese speakers tend to form English possessives earlier than Spanish speakers. Transfer then plays a big role. Transfer, I would argue, is a

form of simplification. One resorts to his/her native language whenever possible.

"Wh" questions in Spanish when one forms a "wh" question, one produces the "wh" word and then the whole verb, and then the subject noun phrase. But the students don't seem to be doing that in the utterances we studied. We don't hear things like "Where going you today?" We hear "Where are you going today?" It's interesting that transfer doesn't seem to come through. Simplification is more powerful. It's easier to use just the "wh" word plus declarative sentence rather than do even the inversion that goes on in the native language. In some dialects of Spanish as Caribbean Spanish, one can optionally form "wh" questions with just the "wh" word and a declarative sentence. If learners come from the Caribbean, they then have an option of forming "wh" question in their native language by inverting the main verb or not inverting it. What they transfer is the simpler form -- the one in which it's not inverted. So if you have two forms in your native language and you transfer, you'll transfer the simpler one. Once again -- simplification.

Relative Pronouns. We noticed in the English speech of Spanish speakers the relative pronouns were dropped. In Spanish, they are required. So here we see simplification once again being more powerful than transfer. It's easier just to do without relative pronouns than to maintain them. Finally, if topic-comment structures are indeed shown to be simpler than subject-predicate structures then we've got yet another aspect of simplification.

Finally, there is one more thing which I think is fascinating. You may be noticing it in your learners' speech, but I think it's another case of simplification -- simplification and transfer -- and that's what I'll call relexification. Derick Bickerton, who's done research on the acquisition of or the development of Hawaiian Pidgin English by Japanese imigrants to Hawaii sees pidginization as just another form of second language acquisition. People attempt to acquire a second language but they have restricted input. They don't have much contact with native speakers and they have received only smatterings of the target language. They have to make some sense out of it. But what he saw going on with Japanese imigrants to Hawaii is that they were starting with Japanese and then substituting initially English-content words for the Japanese-content words until they got to the point where they were speaking English with English content words and Japanese functors or grammatical items. Eventually, the grammatical items would be Anglicized. What we have here is an example of that second stage -- where the learner is speaking English with largely Spanish grammatical items. Here is how it sounds: "Hair de Europa yes, yes. Men y women... I cut hair and make permanent, et make color. Es (fine). Yes, my husband and me.

Cuts my hair. Yes. I go a my country last year por Christmas." Content words with Spanish functors. "Por three weeks only. Now I resident de United States pero no green card. Entonces, I speak con man por un permiso y es posible a go a mi country. He says, 'OK, pero only three weeks'." And then we get, "Yeah, mmm, pero es por now my son eh resident de United States." "My husband make pa, papeles now (papers now.) "Yes, mmm, I put tree de Christmas in my house de my son.....Yes de Oscar. Oh, so very happy. Eight year no look my son. Eight year Oh. Cuando look my son...oh very excited." This, to me, seems to have captured Bickerton's stage two where we have English spoken with Spanish lexical items. Now, a lot of you probably recognized this, thinking "this looks like the mixing and switching we see in bilinguals all the time." I think mixing and switching are a fascinating phenomena, and if you see them going on among your students, listen to it and see how they mix and switch the two languages. But this is more. This may actually be relexification. Now for relexification to take place in the way Bickerton describes it, the learner has to have the belief that the target language speakers or listeners will understand the native language content of the learner's speech. In other words, there would be no sense in using relexification if you were absolutely certain that the people whom you were speaking to could make no sense of it. But, in a place like California now, where so many know a smattering of Spanish, learners may decide that this is a perfectly reasonable strategy and, therefore, you may be seeing it in your learners. In a school where I have supervised teachers in Los Angeles, I noticed practically every teacher knows some Spanish and will attempt to use it with the Spanish speakers. There are also Koreans and Vietnamese in the school and the Koreans and Vietnamese can't get away with relexification because the teachers simply don't know those languages. But for the Spanish speakers it's a possible strategy. So, I suggest listening to your learners to see if that's going on. It may upset you because you see it as mixed, and not pure, but it may actually be a nice step into English.

Italian immigrants to Argentina spoke what the Argentinians called "cocoliche," and it was largely relexified. It was Italian with a gradual incorporation of Spanish words. For an Italian going to Argentina it was a good strategy because, as you know, there's enough similarity between the two languages that Italians and Spanish speakers can often communicate. So the Italian speakers employ strategy whereby they hang on to their native language as much as possible and when it begins to fail, they pull in a few Spanish words but only pull them in to the extent needed. Why? Because there may be a general strategy in second language acquisition which we see particularly at the basilang and which can be articulated in the following way: Make your target language output simple. A corollary to that is -- hang on to your native language to whatever extent possible. So simplify by eliminating inflection morphology

and hang on to your native language by using it in relexification or using English words but with native language word order.

This characterizes the major strategy of the basilang and I would argue also that that constitutes pidginization as well. So for those of you who are interested in this, I am arguing that the basilang is a form of pidginization. It's not a pidgin language, but it is pidginization.

I want to conclude by saying that you are surrounded by this interesting phenomenon, and you are hearing it day after day. Our job is to abolish interlanguage but sometimes it lingers on longer than we would like; nevertheless, while it's there, let's understand and enjoy it. If you pay attention to it, perhaps you can help us researchers understand more about what's going on. It would be nice if we could talk to teachers who've been teaching ten or fifteen years who could say, "Oh yes, of course "ing" comes in first. I've seen it all my life. And the third person singular will be the last one to be acquired. You don't have to see relative pronouns in early stages. I never hear them. I haven't heard them for twenty-five years." We really haven't been able to get teachers to tell us how languages are learned. The reason is because they don't listen to the interlanguage. Interlanguage is the enemy. Interlanguage is the thing we are trying to get rid of. So if the learner is using interlanguage, it's seen as a mark of our failure. But it isn't a sign of our failure -- it's inevitable. You can't just teach the present tense or the third person singular on the third week of school and then expect it to be acquired. It's a gradual process. It has to come again and again. So we're going to be hearing interlanguage in our classes. It is a delightful thing, but don't let it become so precious that we begin arguing that it is the learner's language and that we can't touch it. It is our job to overcome it, to move our students along the continuum. But let's understand and learn from it while the learner is using it.